# Beauties Of Vedic Dharma

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# BEAUTIES OF VEDIC DHARMA

BY

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# BEAUTIES OF VEDIC DHARMA.

The subject of to-night is well-known to you all. Indeed the subject is so extensive, sublime and important that even the slightest semblance of justice cannot be done to it within the brief span of an hour or so. It can be dilated upon at enormous length and examined from various standpoints and whole volumes can be written upon it. The beauties of *Vedic Dharma* are so many and of so multifarious a nature that they will surely defy compression of space and limitation of time but life is short and art is long, as an ancient sire has given his verdict, and I will, therefore, have to use the pruning-knife, sometimes too severely for which you might proably accuse me. It might perhaps have been better if I had chosen a single beauty of the *Vedic Dharma* as the theme of to-night's discourse, but as a part can never describe the whole I think it better to give a complete picture though in miniature, than an incomplete one with huge and massive proportions. I have another plea, *viz.*, to present before those of our brethren of alien faith who are open to conviction but still through ignorance, prejudice or pre-conceived notions cannot appreciate our teachings, certain facts regarding the sublime doctrines enunciated in the Vedas, and thus to enlist their sympathies if not their beliefs. And simultaneous with it is the desire to make an humble appeal to those Hindu youngmen who are characterized by irreligion and indifferentism and whose number is legion, to bestow some thought and attention upon the sublime teachings of their most sacred books. I shall, therefore

* Being a paper read by the author at the last anniversary of the Lahore Arya Samaj.

content myself with only imperfectly giving a bird's eye view of the subject, portraying only some telling features and salient points, for I have neither pluck nor ability to do more.

Before proceeding to delineate the beauties of *Vedic Dharma* I must point out that the very conception of the term *Dharma*, constitutes a beauty in itself. And here we have a secret of the significance of words in the Sanskrit language. I believe that the English language, howsoever richly pluming in borrowed feathers, does not possess a single word to express the full idea conveyed by the term *Dharma* (धर्म्म). धर्म्म from root धृ to sustain is that which sustains, maintains or supports a person in all conditions of life whether good or evil, *i. e.*, which prevents him from falling, decaying or perishing. It is the pabulum, the nourishment that a soul must needs have in its earthly sojourn. It is the motor force, the rule of guidance and conduct in happiness or misery, in pleasure or pain, in joy or sorrow. *Dharma* (धर्म्म) is thus the *sine qua non* of existence without which a man is nought. It is the boundary line, the line of demarcation between the man and the brute. To a monarch, surrounded with all the paraphernalia of state, upon whom millions of eyes are rivetted as the source of all earthly pleasures *dharma* (धर्म्म) is as much an essential as to the most ill-clad beggar whose lot is envied by none. The words of the poet are literally true when he says

धर्म्मएव हतोहन्ति, धर्म्मो रक्षति रक्षितः ।
तस्मात् धर्म्मो न हन्तव्यो मानो धर्म्मो हतोऽवधीत् ॥

"*Dharma* kills those who kill it and protects those who protect it; let us therefore never renounce *Dharma*, lest being killed it might kill us." On the other hand the word *religion* is based upon the erroneous supposition that the relation between God and man has been inevitably broken by the fall of Adam, and is not half

so significant. Similarly the words *mazhab* or *imān* fall far short of the conception of *dharma* (धर्म्म) and express simply faith or belief in certain conventional matters without any reference to their being absolute or complete, good or evil. The ten characteristics of *dharma* (धर्म्म) are thus enumerated by Manu:—

धृतिः क्षमादमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
धीर्विद्यासत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्म्मलक्षणम् ॥

"Fortitude, forgiveness, self-command, honesty, purity, control of senses, wisdom, knowledge, truth and absence of anger are the ten signs of *dharma* (धर्म्म). I may tell you here in passing that though there can be no more sublime standard of morality than this yet the above constitute only the chief elements of *dharma* (धर्म्म) which however is a very wide and comprehensive term. Some glimpse of the importance assigned to it can be gathered from the fact that in ancient times, in this happy land, even the due performance of the most ordinary and insignificant mundane affairs acquired a religious sanction and every physical law and every medical truth was followed with the sanctity of religion.

Now the first beauty of *Vedic Dharma* is its sublime conception of the Supreme Being. The description given of the Almighty in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Darshanas is so grand, vivid and beautiful that it simply baffles human imagination and human understanding. His knowledge and worship (ज्ञान and उपासना) occupy the most prominent place in them which is fully commensurate with the high subject they deal with. I am fully confident that the religious literature of no other country in the world gives a better, purer, holier and more rational monotheistic view of the supreme soul, (परमात्मन्).

Nothing can be more unfortunate than that the priest-ridden Sayana or the false Mahidhar should have penetrated into the mysteries of the Vedas with unclean hands and charged them with polytheism and obscenity. But in doing so they were only representing the interests of their respective cults in order to acquire divine sanction for their selfish doing and foul actions. The European scholars quite ignorant of the canons laid down for the interpretation of the Vedas followed in their wake, and one and all, Roth and Benefey, Max Muller and Monier Williams, Peterson, Wilson and Griffith only found them full of polytheism, materialism or henotheism. But false and mis leading as their researches in this respect have been, one of them at least, the late Professor Max Muller had betimes to admit that the Vedas taught a high form of monotheism. Curiously enough they further sought to introduce their favourite doctrine of evolution into the composition of the Vedas and consequently gave out that they were the figments of an idle and hitherto undeveloped brain and contained only puerile stories——probably to keep pace with their own Hebrew Old Testament.

The Upanishads, however, have fared better at their hands' presenting in their self-same theory of evolution a higher flight of scholarship, genius and imagination but withal teaching strict monotheism. Also they are still unable to account for the apparent inconsistency of the Darshanás; in their infallible opinion one school of philosophy teaches atheism, another pantheism; one points out action (कर्म) to be the only way of salvation while another speaks of knowledge (ज्ञान) as the only means of divine realization—forgetting all along that starting from their individual points all of them converge towards one goal, one point, one centre.

Well, the times have changed and Swami Dayananda has given us the key by which the ancients opened the treasures of the Vedas. I have not space here to give exhaustive quotations from Vedic literature as to the Vedic conception of God but a few selected at random will not be out of place.

न द्वितीयो न तृतीयश्चतुर्थोनाप्युच्यते । न पंचमो न षष्ठः सप्तमो नाप्युच्यते ॥ नाष्टमो न नवमो दशमो नाप्युच्यते । तमिदं निगतं सहः स एष एक एकवृदेक एव । सर्व्वे अस्मिन् देवा एकवृतो भवन्ति ॥

Atharv kànd, XIII Anuváka IV, Mantra, 16.

"Neither second, nor third, nor fourth can be uttered of him. Neither fifth, nor sixth, nor seventh can be uttered of him. He is alone, one and only one. All the heavenly bodies have their stay in Him."

I may incidentally remark here that upon these 10 numerals the science of numbers (arithmetic) and consequently all allied sciences are based and therefore there was no necessity of repeating any further numbers for emphasizing Gods' unity.

तदेजति तन्नैजति तद्दूरे तद्वन्तिके ।
तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदुसर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥

Yajur, Chap. 40, Mantra 5.

"He moves and He does not move; He is far and He is near. He permeates everything and yet he transcends everything."

स पर्य्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रणमस्नाविरꣳशुद्धमपापविद्धम् । कविर्मनीषीपरिभूः स्वयम्भूर्याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान् व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥

Yajur, Chap. 40, Mantra, 8.

"He is all-encompassing, refulgent, without body, invulnerable, without muscles, pure, untainted by sin. He is omniscient, ruler of the intellect. omnipresent and self-existent. He has given out things (or meanings) in their reality for all ages to come."

He is सत् all-existence, चित् all-intelligence, and आनन्द all-bliss.

न तत्र चक्षुर्गच्छति न वाग्गच्छति नो मनो न विद्मो न विजानिमो यथैतदनुशिष्यादन्यदेव तद्विदितादथो अविदितादधि । इति शुश्रुम पूर्वेषां ये नस्तद्व्याचचक्षिरे ॥ यद्वाचानभ्युदितं येन वागभ्युद्यते । तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ यन्मनसा न मनुते येनाहुर्मनो मतम् । तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ यच्चक्षुषा न पश्यति येन चक्षूँषि पश्यंति । तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥ यच्छोत्रेण न शृणोति येन श्रोत्रमिदं श्रुतं । तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते । यत्प्राणेन न प्राणिति येन प्राणः प्रणीयते । तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥

Kena Upanishad, Section I—3-8

"The eye cannot preceive Him, the language cannot describe Him, neither can the mind compass or determine Him. We cannot comprehend Him, the infinite, by our finite faculties. He is different from the known (phenomenon) and the unknown (Noumenon) and transcends both. Thus have we heard from the ancient sages who have declared Him unto us. Thou shouldst know Him to be the Supreme Being who cannot be expressed by means of speech but who actuates the speech, who is not conceived by the mind but who comprehends the mind, who does not see by means of the eye but by whose means the eyes see, who does not hear with the ear but by whose means the ear

hears, who does not breathe by means of respiration but by whose means the breath is sustained ; not what thou worshippest as such is God."

And further on the same Upanishad, illustrating the maxim " brevity is the soul of wit," laconically says

नाहं मन्ये सुवेदेति नो नवेदेति वेद च ।
यो नस्तद्वेद तद्वेद नो नवेदेति वेद च ॥

" I do not profess that I know Him well, neither is it that I know Him not (for He is certainly knowable), nor is it that I know Him. He among us who knows this knows Him and not he who says that he does not know Him at all or knows Him of certainty."

Or yet another of the same kind :—

यस्यामतं तस्यमतं मतं यस्य न वेदसः ।
अविज्ञातं विजानतां विज्ञातमविजानतां ॥

" He who professes that he does not know God knows Him and he who professes that he knows Him does not know Him. Those who pride themselves on knowing Him do not know Him while those who humbly profess not to know Him know Him."

The Svetasvatar Upanishad thus describes Him :—

" He is smaller than the small, greater than the great and resides inside the soul. He has neither sound nor touch, neither sight, nor taste, nor smell. He is eternal and beginningless and illimitable and is subtler and finer than the human ego. Man can only extricate himself from the jaws of death by worshipping such a being."

अपाणिपादो जवनो ग्रहीता पश्यत्यचक्षुः स श्रृणोत्यकर्णः ।
स वेत्ति वेद्यं न च तस्यास्तिवेत्ता तमाहुरग्रयं पूरुषं महान्तम ॥

Svetasvatara, Upanishad Chapt. III, 19.

"He has neither hands nor feet but He can move and grasp no eye but He sees, no ear but He hears. He knows all that is to be known, yet there is none that knows Him. He is called the foremost and the greatest."

न तस्य कार्य्यं करणञ्च विद्यते न तत्समश्चाऽप्यधिकश्च दृश्यते ।
परास्य शक्तिर्विविधैव श्रूयते स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबलक्रिया च ॥

Svetasvatara, Upanishad Chapt. VI, 8.

"Neither cause nor effect is known for Him, there is none perceived that is like Him or superior to Him. His powers are declared to be surpassingly manifold; His wisdom, force, and action are inborn." And further on the same Upanishad says:—

"There is in the world no lord of Him, nor ruler, nor also a cause. He is the sole cause, the soveriegn of the soveriegn of cause, none has brought him forth and none holds sway over him.

तिलेषु तैलं दधिनीवसर्पिरापः स्रोतः स्वरणीषुचाग्निः ।
एवमात्मनि गृह्यतेऽसौ सत्येनैनं तपसा योनुपश्यति ॥

Svetasvatar Upanishad Chapt. I, 14.

"As oil in the sesamum (is found by pressing), butter in the curd is obtained by churning), water in the stream is preceived by digging) and fire in the wood (is obtained by rubbing), so is the supreme soul perceived in the human ego by practising truth and austerity."

Turning to the Mundak Upanishad we find the same glorious description of the Supreme Spirit who is invisible, incomprehensible, without distinction, without eyes or ears, without hands and feet, eternal, all-pervading, omnipresent, subtle and imperishable, whom the sages perceive to be the source of all that

exists in the world, who is resplendent in form and incorporeal in being, existing without and within, without any physical and mental organs, pure and holy, and greater and subtler than the soul immortal.

न तत्र सूर्य्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतो ऽयमग्निः । तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्व्वं तस्य भासा सर्व्वमिदं विभाति ॥

2nd Mundaka, Upanishad II Sec., 10.

"There shines neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor lightning itself, much less this elemental fire. It is through His lustre that all these heavenly bodies shine, it is through His refulgence that all this is illumined."

And when such a resplendent, glorious being is beheld, all the knots of the heart are cut off and untied, all doubts are removed and eradicated, and all actions cease to operate.

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad it is written, this supreme soul is verily the lord of all beings, the sovereign of all creatures. As all spokes are fastened in the nave and the circumference of the wheel of a chariot, thus also all creatures, all heavenly bodies, all globes, all lives, all souls are fastened in Him.

Questioned as to who was the Inner Ruler Yajnavalkya replied :—

"He who dwelling in the earth is within (or separate from) the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body is the earth, who from within governs the earth, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the waters is within (or separate from) the waters, whom the waters do not know, whose body are the

waters, who from within governs the waters, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the fire is within (or separate from) the fire, whom the fire does not know, whose body is the fire, who from within rules the fire, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the atmosphere is within (or separate from) the atmosphere, whom the atmosphere does not know, whose body is the atmosphere, who from within rules the atmosphere, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the wind is within (or separate from) the wind, whom the wind does not know, whose body is the wind, who from within rules the wind, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the heavens is within (or separate from) the heavens, whom the heavens do not know, whose body are heavens, who from within governs the heavens, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the sun, is within (or separate from) the sun, whom the sun does not know, whose body is the sun, who from within rules the sun, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the quarters, is within (or separate from) the quarters, whom the quarters do not know, whose body are the quarters, who from within rules the quarters, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the moon and stars, is within (or separate from) the moon and stars, whom the moon and stars do not know, whose body are the moon and stars, who from within

rules the moon and stars, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the ether, is within (or separate from) the ether, whom the ether does not know, whose body is the ether, who from within rules the ether, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the darkness, is within (or separate from) the darkness, whom the darkness does not know, whose body is the darkness, who from within rules the darkness, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the light is within (or separate from) the light, whom the light does not know, whose body is the light, who from within rules the light, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in all elements, is within (or separate from the elements, whom the elements do not know, whose body are the elements, who from within rules the elements, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the vital air, is within (or separate from) the vital air, whom the vital air does not know, whose body is the vital air, who from within rules the vital air, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the speech is within (or separate from) the speech, whom the speech does not know, whose body is the speech; who from within rules the speech, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the eye, is within (or separate from) the eye whom the eye does not know, whose body is the eye, who from within rules the eye, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the ear is within (or separate from) the ear, whom the ear does not know, whose body is the ear, who from within rules the ear, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the mind, is within (or separate from) the mind, whom the mind does not know, whose body is the mind, who from within rules the mind, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the skin, is within (or separate from) the skin, whom the skin does not know, whose body is the skin who from within rules the skin, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in knowledge, is within (or separate from) knowledge, whom knowledge does not know, whose body is knowledge, who from within rules the knowledge, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul.

He who dwelling in the seed (of procreation) is within (or separate from) the seed, whom the seed does not know, whose body is the seed, who from within rules the seed, verily is that immortal being the Ruler of thy soul. Unseen He sees, unheard He hears, unminded He minds, unknown He knows. There is none that sees but He; there is none that hears but He; there is none that minds but He; there is none that knows but He. Verily that immortal being is the Ruler of thy soul, whatever is different from Him is perishable".

Thus we see that the God of the Vedas is not the mechanical God of the Deists who assign a separate place to the Supreme Being outside this globe, and liken the universe to an immense and wonderful machine which He made a long time ago, and was afterwards relegated by Him to the limbo of oblivion or at most interfered by a special act of divine power styled miracles. This clock-view of

the universe and of its mechanical author has been bitterly satirised by the sage of Chelsea in his well-known book 'Sartor Resartus' in which he speaks of such a being as "an absentee God sitting idle ever since the firstsabbath at the out-ide of his universe and seeing it go". Nor is the vedic God merely immanent in nature as Tennyson says in his. 'In Memoriam.'

"That God which ever lives and loves
One God, one Law, one Element,
And one far off divine event
To which the whole creation moves".

He is surely immanent in nature, *i. e.* He works from within it, controls, guides and regulates it, but He is much more *viz* He is transcendent at the same time. He not only encompasses nature but He spreads beyond it. The God of the Vedas is not a wrathful or unjust God who dooms man to eternal perdition for the sins of four score years and ten, or who visits the iniquities of the fathers upon their progeny ; nor is He a partial God who needs a mediator to intercede on behalf of the descendants of Adam and consigns the unbelievers into everlastling hell ; nor is He a helpless being with his potencies and powers confined within the precincts of the Seventh Heaven. The pure and holy God taught in the vedas is not the anthropomorphic, childish God who is pleased with incense and sacrfiices and oft times repents for what He has done, and shows innumerable favours to those whom He calls his "chosen people". The God of the Vedas is not the God of the Epicureans who believed that the gods dwelt apart in divine repose while blind necessity had its way with human destiny, nor of the Stoics who reduced the Deity to the level of a sublimated ethereal fire in which dwelt the divine creative thought and impulse. The God of the Vedas is not the personal God of the Puranas who takes human and even

hideous animal shapes at will, nor of the Neo-vedantists in whom the creator and the creature merge together.

The Vedas teach and preach that the matter, out of which the cosmos with its heierarchy of beings is evolved by God, is co-eternal with Him, which some zealots hastly misinterpret into co-equal. The theory of creation out of nothing cannot stand for a moment since science has given her vedicts "Ex nihilo nihil fit." (Out of nothing comes nothing) and "matter is in destructible." The eternity of matter, ridiculed by some, does not in the least detract from the glory and power of the supreme bein g, for, barring creation and annihilation, God has full power over it. On the other hand if matter emanated from God it would bring Him down to the level of inert creation. The God of the Vedas is a God in whom justice and mercy blend into one harmonious whole, whose love is the love of a mother suckling her infant at her breast whose justice is that of a father who loves while he reproves and even rebukes while he loves. The Vedic God is not a God who favours one class at the expense of another, but He looks upon all human beings, nay upon all sentient creatures, irrespective of age, creed, colour, class, clan, clime, genus, order or species with the same eye and rewards and punishes them according to their individual actions. The God of the Vedas is a God who is perfect in knowledge and in wisdom, who knows the present, the past and the future, who is omnipresent and all pervading, who controls and guides the smallest atom, who is incorporeal and in divisible, illimitable and unfathomable. एकमेवा द्वितीयम् : He is one alone without a second. He is one not as the Christians believe to be three in one or one in three, which, to say the least, is inconsistent ; His oneness is not even that of a tree which has diversity within unity—its branches, leaves, bark, root and fruit being different from each other *inter se*; but without a parallel or an

example His oneness stands uniquely alone. He is pure and refulgent, one essence throughout, shining with truth सत्य knowledge ज्ञान and infinity अनन्त. Being incorporeal He can not debase Himself by assuming any bodily form or shape; His omnipotence does not mean that He can become what He is not or act or desire contrary to His nature and attributes. Thus though He is merciful yet He can neither stoop to be unjust by forgiving the misdeeds of a sinner nor can He lower Himself to be revengeful or retributive in the least degree by dooming such a sinner to eternal perdition which would be contrary to His attribute of mercy. He has endowed us with an innate desire to do good; He has given us a *vade mecum* in the Vedas for our guidance; His punishments are always commensurate with our misdeeds and even in punishing us He guides and corrects us; His punishments are never eternal—all this emphatically shows that the God of the Vedas is all-merciful and His sublime mercy cannot better be conceived than by His letting every chance for a soul to rise howsoever steeped in sin it might be. He is infinite and transcends all idea of time or space. He is the almighty creator (ब्रह्मा) the benign preserver (विष्णुः) and the bliss-giving regenerator (शिवः) and a wise ruler (ईशः) of the universe. The God of the vedas is a benevolent God who has the good of all creatures at heart but He does not interfere with the free will of human beings. According to the Vedas it is incumbent upon all persons to worship Him each morn and eve by adoration (स्तुतिः), supplication (प्रार्थना) and communion (उपासना), not because his past sins would be forgiven but because adoration will engender love in the object of worship and bring about assimilation of divine attributes, habits and qualities in the worshipper, supplication will produce power, strength, courage and fortitude to resist and overcome evil and to do good, and communion will produce cons-

ciousness of the closest and veritable presence of the Almighty which would thrill and electrify man's soul with inexpressible hilarity and ecstasy—thus the end of existence will be achieved and the way of salvation paved, and man will exclaim.

त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव त्वमेव बंधुश्चसखा ।
त्वमेव त्वमेव विद्या द्राविणं त्वमेव त्वमेव सर्व्वं मम देव देव ॥

"Thou alone art mother and father ; thou alone relative and friend ; thou alone knowledge and wealth ; thou alone ! thou alone ! art all in all to me, O Lord".

The model Vedic prayer, I may add in passing, is not for the enjoyments of this life, for wealth, possession, power or dominion but for bodily and mental purity, control of senses, physical and mental strength, true knowledge and wisdom, spritual light love, mercy, justice and peace. Can any body conceive of a better supplication of peace or of freedom from fear than the following taken from the vedas.

द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षꣳ शान्तिः पृथिवी शान्तिरापः शान्ति रोष-धयः शान्तिः । वनस्पतयः शान्तिर्विश्वेदेवाः शान्तिर्ब्रह्म शान्तिः सर्वं शान्तिः शान्तिरेवशान्तिः सामा शान्तिरेधि ॥

"May the heavens give peace ! may the atmosphere give peace ! may the earth give peace ! may the waters give peace ! may the herbs give peace ! may the roots and fruits give peace ! may all the celestial beings give peace ! may the great God give peace ! may all give peace, peace and peace alone ! may I obtain that peace !"

अभयं नः करत्यन्तरिक्षमभयं द्यावापृथिवी उभे इमे । अभयं पश्चादभयं पुरस्तादुत्तरादधरादभयं नोअस्तु । अभयं मित्रादभयममित्रा-दभयं ज्ञातादभयं परोक्षात् । अभयं नक्तमभयं दिवानः सर्वा आशा मम मित्रं भवन्तु ॥

"May the atmosphere give us freedom from fear ! may both the heaven and the earth give us freedom from fear ! Behind us and before us, above us and beneath us, may the freedom from fear be ! From friends and from foes, from the known and the unknown may the same freedom from fear accrue ! Freedom from fear at night, and freedom from fear at day, may all the quarters be friendly to me ".

The second beauty of the vedic Dharma is its possession of a complete code of knowledge and a true revelation called the Veda. The essentials of a true revelation are that it must be given in the beginning of creation all at once and not in parts handed down at different times but should be perfect in itself. It must be in the parent language, and free from human affairs, traditions, historical events, stories, fables and other accretions of time. Further it must not be in any way inconsistent or contradictory or contrary to the laws of nature and human reason It must be for all human beings irrespective of age, clime, colour or time and should be perfectly impartial, thorough and dignified in its treatment of all questions detailed therein. Judged by the above criterion none of the so-called revelations except the Veda fulfils the condition of a true revelation. Even European scholars have admitted that the Vedas are the oldest books in the world, and are written in a language which besides being in the words of Sir William Jones " more copious than Latin and more perfect than Greek " is the oldest language extant. Their prejudice does not allow them to call Sanskrit the mother of all languages but they cannot refrain from styling it their eldest sister, and with perfect gravity regret at the death or extinction of the mother which, say they, was the parent of them all. But truth cannot be hidden. The construction of the Sanskrit alphabet itself is of so perfect a character as to place it at once in the fore-ranks of all languages, *e.g.*, there can be no simpler or primitive sound

than that of अ the very first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet; its pronounciation is just what is expressed by its sound. Not so in other languages *e.g.* alpha in Greek, and *aleph* in the Hebrew and *aleph* in Arabic, though their phonetics are simply अ yet these latter have got cumbersome appendages to them which have nothing to do with the sound and thus at once point out to their imperfect origin. Similarly other letters of the alphabets of other languages can be proved to be extremely defective. The Sanskrit alphabet, on the other hand, is graduated, being based on the science of physiology and of accoustics and is the most perfect of its kind. The lengthened sound of a vowel follows a simple vowel and consonants follow the vowels in beautiful array embracing every simple note of sound. That the Vedas are free from historical events, traditions, mythology and fables Swami Dyananda has clearly shown by his translation of the holy texts, nor do they sanction miracles as the latter are interferences with the laws of nature. They do not point out the necessity of a Saviour or mediator as the God depicted in them is not a human God solicitous of recommendations or letters of introduction, The right observances of the rules of conduct promulgated therein are the only credentials with which a man can have a vision of and communion with the Fountain of Light. Even from internal evidence the Vedas can be proved to be of Divine origin. The use of words having many meanings all based upon their derivations, the construction of verse and sentence, the perfection of metaphor and simile, the sweet melody and harmonious symphony of letters and high pitch of thought all point out to their super-human and preter-human origin. The necessity of revelation is admitted by the great majority of people on earth and it is not my province here to make any special observations on this aspect of the question. Just as the presence of light is absolutely necessary for the

physical eye, so does the existence of a fountain of true knowledge become a matter of absolute necessity for the mental eye and spiritual vision. And thus we believe that the principles of all true knowledge are delineated in the Vedas. Many educated people are apt to caricature this seemingly presumptuous and abnormal view but they forget that our contention is not that the Vedas do contain all elaborate, detailed knowledge but simply the *germs* and principles of all knowledge and ready made texts of all sciences, which of course human mind can develop, tabulate,, improve upon and extend but can in no way replace, alter or eliminate. A shrewd observer can find principles underlying even single words which have now found their way into the common parlance. For example the Vedic word जगत् (universe) which occurs in one of the Sandhya Mantrás from गम्, गच्छ to go, is even by its composition clearly in accordance with the modern scientific view of the motion of the planets. Similarly the word गो from the same root for earth unmistakably shows that the terrestrial motion was not unknown to the Aryans. In like manner the word भूगोल for earth in Sanskrit points out that the rotundity of this little planet of ours was not first discovered by western *savants*. The words सत्य (truth) सृष्टि (creation) and a host of others are equally interesting and important. But best of all, the composition of the word ओ३म् (*om*) than which no monosyllable in the whole history of human vocables is more pregnant with meaning or is more admired in the Vedas and Upanishads, beautifully points out why it should have been selected as the *only* appropriate name for the Deity. अ is the very first simple articulate sound, without its help no consonant can be spoken and in whatever combination it might fall it does not change its vowel character. Thus the letter अ

signifies that God who is all-beginning, all-pervading, all-supporting but unsupported, and unchangeable. उ is the last of simple vowels and like अ is self-supporting and by reason of its being pronounced between the lips it stands at the door, as it were, of speech and thus signifies that God who is not only the beginning of what is self-supporting but its end as well, and by its position between the lips it shows that God is not only all-beginning but is also the middle or आधार (support) of all. Again म् the labio-nasal sound closes articulate speech which shows that God is not only the beginning, the middle but also the end of all. Thus the monosyllable ओ३म् consisting of the first, the middle and the last articulate sound encompasses the whole speech. In the same way the one God so appropriately termed ओ३म् (*om*) encompasses the whole universe as expressed or expressible by speech. I have only sketched the bold outline of this monosyllable which can easily be grasped by every one of us and space does not permit me to dwell upon the more recondite meaning of the above three letters, and I therefore leave them to the students of Upanishads which show how these letters express God the creator, the supporter and preserver and regenerator and the three phases of wakeful, contemplative and slumbering. It is not only that we do not find any appropriate monosyllable for God in any other language or any other religion but no simpler, more concise or more significant monosyllable can ever be conceived to express the inexpressible who is called the quintessence of all essences. And this is not all. The ओ३म् (*om*) of the Vedas has the fourth *mátra* which is unutterable signifying that the full conception of God cannot be expressed by language of the mouth and thus He not only encompasses what can be expressed by speech but even transcends it or in other words God not only encompasses time and space but He transcends them as well.

The third beauty of the Vedic Dharma is its teaching regarding the human soul. The human ego is not an evanescent, dazzling spark passing off like the transience of a meteor, and attaining a stage of complete annihilation when its earthly career is run, as the Buddhists believe. Neither is it a mere phantom, a transient breath, a mere shadow of a shade, an airy nothing as the Christians and Mahommedans would have us believe. On the other hand it is a very refined, subtle, and invisible entity, the real conscious substance that sees, feels, hears, smells, tastes, wills, knows, does, and understands everything*. It is not a medley of flesh, fat and bone which can be probed by the aid of a dissecting knife, neither is it a compound of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen which can be found out by qualitative or quantitative analysis, nor is it what the scientists call protoplasm or amoeba that can reveal its charms to the vision of a powerful telescope. Scientists have tried to solve the question of the genesis of life with the aid of anatomy, chemistry, physiology, psychology and biology but except discovering a sort of physical basis of life, the real essence *átma* (आत्मा) is as hidden from their material gaze to-day as ever it was. And why should it not be when everything in these experimental days is reduced to the terms of matter and motion.

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥
अजो नित्यो शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो ।
न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥

So says the Gita : "Weapons cannot cut it, fire cannot burn it neither can waters moisten it, nor can the wind dry it. It is unborn, eternal, perpetual and primeval and does not perish with the body." The human ego according to the Vedas is not

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* एष हि द्रष्टा, स्प्रष्टा, श्रोता, घ्राता, रसयिता, मन्ता ।
बोद्धा, कर्त्ता, विज्ञानात्मा पुरुषः ॥ Prashna upnishad IV 9,

inherently corrupt or sinful as believed by some other religions but is by its nature a pure, intelligent and eternal entity. The Nyaya Darshan mentions the following attributes of the human spirit—इच्छा (desire), द्वेष (repulsion), प्रयत्न (exertion), सुख (pleasure), दुःख (pain), ज्ञान (intelligence). To these Vaisheshika philosophy adds प्राणापान (respiration), निमेषोन्मेष (nictation), जीवन (physiologic building), गति (movement), इन्द्रिय (sense-activity), and अन्तरविकार (organic feelings). According to this philosophy *Atma* (आत्मा) is a द्रव्य or substratum and has been most appropriately compared to a driver controlling, directing, guiding and regulating the bodily carriage which is at his disposal. Again it has been compared to a smith constantly expelling vitiated air out of the lung-bellows ; or to a juggler playing with the puppet-like movements of the eyelashes ; or to an architect building up from a slender foundation to a splendid mansion the bodily edifice for his residence, repairing its injured parts and making whole its broken places ; or to a spectator standing in the midst of the bodily room provided with organic windows on all sides, who can see unruffled and unagitated, from his high position, all that takes place in the microcosm. Besides the above attributes the human ego is a responsible agent being quite free in its actions. It is also impressible for such impressibility alone can cause it to remember things. And as the spirit of one individual is quite unable to penetrate into or realize the feelings, desires and aspirations of another individual it is apparent that each ego has a distinct entity of its own and therefore possesses the attribute "number." On account of its circulating freely in the body it has magnitude. As the feelings of pleasure and pain, desire and repulsion all arise in the subtle body and the spirit is only conscious of them by its contact therewith it also possesses attributes of connectibility and separability. Unimpeded by any external laws or regulations the human soul has the utmost liberty to perform any actions it likes,

whether good or evil but when once an act has been committed the soul is bound to reap its fruit in accordance with the unimpeachable and eternal laws of the just and merciful God. This is known as the doctrine of *karma* that at once solves the difficult problem of the apparent unequal dispensation of providence which has baffled the minds of all thinkers and philosophers of the west. To what else but their past *karma* can you attribute the fact that while one man is born with a silver spoon in his mouth in the palace of a king, another is born in abject poverty in a peasant's hut, while the wicked seems to prosper the virtuous appears to suffer. "As you sow, so shall you reap" is a well-known adage which is not less true in the spiritual than in the physical world. If a man commits bad deeds it is but natural that he should meet his deserts, and if he performs good acts it is equally just that he should reap their fruits. By performing good acts desire to live a hundred years, excepting this there is no other way to free one self from bondage.* Says the Bradiharanyaka Upanishad: "As one acts or conducts himself so does he become. He who performs good acts becomes good and the evil-door becomes a sinner. Meritorious deeds beget merit and evil deeds result in sin. Certainly this soul is full of desires, as one's desire so is his resolve, as his resolve so is his work, as his work so is his reward."

The aim of divine punishment as we all know is not vengeance or retribution but reformation of the soul. Its object is to impress upon the ego the value of keeping the right path of *dharma* and duly observing the benign, just and merciful laws of God—and these alone can elevate it. One of the modes of such punishment or reward is known by the name of transmigration or metempsychosis called by the name of पुनर्जन्म (rebirth) in the

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कुर्व्वन्नेवेह कर्म्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतंसमाः ।
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म्म लिप्यतेनरे ॥

Shastras. The doctrine of transmigration is not only an integral part of Hindu thought and feeling alone but even the Egyptians of old and the philosophers of Greece from Pythagoras to Plato have been its most fervent advocates. The Magi and English Druids, Celts and Britons, Arab philosophers and Mahommedan Sufis have at one time or other been its pious devotees. This soul-satisfying doctrine even found its way into the early Christian church and continental philosophers like Kant, Fichte, Leibnitz, Schopenhauer and Hume have embraced this view. Even English literature to a certain extent is surcharged with this thought and poets and writers like Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson and Whitman have echoed the same sentiment in their writings. In his famous "Ode on immortality" Wordsworth beautifully says :—

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,<br>
The soul that rises within us our life's star<br>
Hath had elsewere its setting,<br>
And cometh from afar,<br>
Not in entire forgetfulness,<br>
And not in utter nakedness,<br>
But trailing clouds of glory do we come<br>
From God who is our home."

"As a person casteth off tattered garments and puts on new ones, so does the soul cast off bodies which are no longer fit for use and assumes new ones" says the Gita.* Fortified by this convincing of most convincing arguments death loses its sting to the Hindus making them the most submissive and patient people in the world even up to this day. The belief that the direst misfortunes and the most dismal calamities are the result of one's own misdeeds at once gives a resignation and

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* वासांसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।
तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यन्यानि संयाति नवानि देही ॥

calmness under the most trying circumstances which no other belief can. This again indicates the sublime justice and mercy of God blended together—His justice shown in his punishment and his mercy in the contentment brought about by this peace-giving doctrine in which even up to the present day nearly three fourth of the people of Asia believe and live.

The intricate maze of caste system running like a labyrinth throughout Hindu society at the present day is quite unknown to the Vedas. On the other hand the whole of human society is divided into 4 *Varnás* (वर्ण) or classes—a division which is at once most simple, natural and indispensable, and this is the fourth beauty of the Vedic *Dharma.* A beautiful *mantra* in the *Purushsúkta* (पुरुष सूक्त) describes the constitution of human society by means of an analogy between the human body and mankind in general.

ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीत् बाहुरजन्यकृतः ।
ऊरू तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पद्भ्यां शूद्रोऽजायत् ॥

"The Brahmanas are his (*Purusha's)* head, the Kshatriyas are made his arms, the Vaishyas are what are his thighs, and the Shudras are made his feet". By a reference to the context we find that the *purusha* here referred to means the personified person, *ie* mankind or society in general, the aggregate of human beings taken as a unit, identical with the Greek conception of macrocosm. Just as the head, the arms, the thighs and the feet are the principal external members of the bodily frame, the (भौतिक शरीर) of one human being, similarly society is endowed with its head, arms, thighs and feet called its Brahmanas, Kshatrias, Vaishyas and Shudras respectively and as in the case of the bodily frame the death of one member means the death or decay of all other members, in the same way the death or decay of any member of

the social frame means the death or decay of society itself. To illustrate my meaning still further let us take the case of these four members of the human body as well as of society and trace their functions in their respective spheres of activity. The head is the most important part of the bodily mechanism—the highest, the topmost not only in the physical sense but in the mental and moral sense too. It contains the brain, that most important organ without which the faculties of perception, thought, feeling and judgment would be null and void and man would be left a mere automaton without the means of scheming, devising or regulating his affairs. Its importance can be judged by the maxim "mind is the man". If the brain of a man is deranged all his majesty, his grandeur and his glory are gone. If therefore the head is so important in the microcosm how much more so in the macrocosm? Can any society ever exist without its head the Brahmanas *i. e.* its thinkers and seers, its counsellors and advisers, its priests and divines, its poets, philosophers and literati? Without them society would be at a stand still and would create a void. It is the *sine qua non*, the most indispensable requisite in human society. Thus we see that Brahmans are centres of living energy—sparks of the fire of knowledge—controlling, directing, guiding the various movements in the world, and fulfilling their mission in teaching, preaching and educating the public.

The function of arms in the human body is that of a policeman, *i. e.* of protection and self-preservation—arm being the most powerful organ. **बाहुर्वैबलम्** so says the *shatpath.* Arm thus signifies force—physical force, not brutal force. The function of the arms of society *i. e.* of Kshatriyas is the same but on a grander scale. Here the protection is not of the individual but of the state. Its object is to aid, help and protect the weak, the oppressed and the afflicted; to subjugate the wicked, the enemies of

the state, to conquer but not to tyrannise. Its purpose is to arouse, to quicken, to vivify the dead, dull and dormant forces of inert society ; to galvanise into life decaying powers and faculties. Its aim is that of suppression, though not of oppression ; of protection, not of subjugation. The Kshatriyas thus supply human society with its kings and its rulers, its generals and its warriors, its army and its navy, its guards and its "wardens of the public peace".

(ऊरु) or thighs represent the power of supporting the body as well as of locomotion. Their function may not be so elevated as that of the head or so stately as that of the arm but all the same it is not less important than either. The chief function of the thighs of society viz. Vaishyas is that of trade, commerce and agriculture. They are the merchants, the business men of society without whose aid the transactions of the world cannot proceed for a moment. From their ranks they must produce men who would go out into regions hitherto unexplored to seek "fresh fields and pastures new". In human society, therefore, they represent the travellers, adventurers and navigators for facilitating the development of the various resources, industries and means of subsistence in the world. They are the provenders-in-general of society. Their object is not to offer sacrifies at the shrines of Plutus and Mammon but to offer sacrifices to the whole world in the shape of the various necessities of life.

The purpose of foot in the body is that of service and physical labour. What the head commands, the foot is ready to accomplish. It is the instrument of serviceableness. The feet of society are the Shudras because being illiterate and unfit for higher and nobler duties in life they engage in all sorts of manual labour and serve the rest of the world. In all human societies all these four classes must exist side by side and perform their respective duties together. The head alone is not the whole man, neither the arm,

nor the thigh, nor the foot. Similarly the Brahmanas alone do not constitute human society neither do the Kshatriyas, nor the Vaishyas, nor the Shudras. One must not trench upon the sphere of the other, each has a respective part to play. In order that the whole body may be in harmonious working order it is most important that each organ must work conjointly and simultaneously with the other. The same analogy holds good in the case of society. Thus we find that these 4 divisions are equally indispensable to society. But unlike modern orthodox view action and not birth is the principal thing in determining to what class a person should belong, and we learn that in ancient times many Shudras by sheer force of their meritorious deeds got into the folds of Brahmanas and were recognised as such by the society of those days and even by posterity. Amongst such were Parashara and Vyasa, Vasisht and Vishwamitra and a host of others.

From the four *varnâs* I must now turn to the four *ashramas* or stages in life, *viz.* those of a Student-celibate, Householder, Recluse and Ascetic, and this I term the fifth beauty of the Vedic Dharma. I have not space here to dwell upon all of the above stages but shall briefly touch only the first called *Brahmacharya ashram.*

आयुस्तेजो बलं वीर्य्यं प्रज्ञा श्रीश्च महायशः ।
पुण्यं च मतिप्रियत्वं च हन्यते ऽब्रह्मचर्य्यया ॥

Rendered into English the verse means that "the non-observance of Brahmacharya will destroy longevity, lustre, strength, prowess, intelligence, prosperity, beauty, fame, meritoriousness and love." We have only to turn our eyes to the degenerate condition of modern India that we find this prophetic saying of Gautama Rishi true to the very letter and spirit of it. This is the evil the worm, the canker that is eating away the

vitals of our young men and making them an easy prey for disease and death. Dive deep into the strata of human society, sound the ocean of humanity with the plummet of observation and you will find degeneration, degradation and deterioration manifest in all places where Brahmacharya is not observed. To the observer of *Brahmacharya* comes no adversity, says the *shatpatha*. This noble institution was the life and soul of individual and public progress, education and happiness in ancient India. The non-observance of *Brahmacharya* at the present day is not only the one primary cause of our national degradation and deterioration but its negligence is also the greatest obstacle in the way of our national regeneration and amelioration.

According to the Chhandogya Upanishad there are three grades of *Brahmacharya*, the ordinary *Brahmacharya*, the middling *Brahmacharya* and the highest *Brahmacharya*. The ordinary *Brahmacharya* is the living a life of perfect celibacy devoted to study, up to one's twenty-fourth year. The student must remember that the practice of this *Brahmacharya* secures one an exemption from physical ills and mental ailments, and a life of peace and tranquility ranging over seventy or eighty years. The middling *Brahmacharya* is the living a life of perfect celibacy up to one's forty-fourth year. This *Brahmacharya* conduces to the fullest devolopment of the physical powers and gives the soul perfect control over the body, the senses and the mind and makes one a terror to the wicked and sinful physically, morally and intellectually. The highest grade of *Brahmacharya* is the living a life of perfect celibacy, devoted to study-up to one's forty-eighth year. Even as the perfection of the alphabet lies in forty-eight letters, even so does the perfection of *Brahmacharya* consist in forty-eight years. This kind of *Brahmacharya* conduces to the fullest and harmonious development of *all* the powers of man. In our shastras very hard and

fast rules have been laid down for the guidance of *Brahmacharis* during this most important stage of life. At the early age of 8 a lad was made over by his parents to the Gurukula where he resided with his Guru, at least up to the age of 25, and considered him *in loco parentes*. Shunning all the pleasures of the senses by a rigorous system of self-denial he had to observe rigid austerities in the mode of his life, was required to be always truthful and to be chaste in thought, word and deed. Avoiding the arch-enemies—anger, fear, sorrow, avarice, pride etc, by a systematic course of self-discipline he had to shun the eight kinds of lust, was required to conserve his seminal fluid and never to swerve from rectitude. And accoutred with these equipments he regularly pursued the study of shàshtras with ever-increasing devotion. The education was given *gratis*, no gift being so precious as that of education, the ancient Aryans scorned the very idea of selling or even bartering it. In that holy academical sanctuary the monarch's son was accorded the same treatment as his humbler fellow pupil. And Manu says that such was the respect paid to a *Brahmachari vidyarthi* that even if the king crossed him in the way, the earthly potentate and not the student-celibate had to observe the Rule of the Road and let the *vidyarthi* pass. The aim of education being the harmonious development of all faculties the result was that his physique, mind and heart were trained simultaneously and to the highest degree. After completing his course of education he was allowed, with the permission of his preceptor, to return home and get married. An indomitable will which defied all opposition, a tenacity of purpose as firm as a rock, muscles of iron and nerves of steel, strong moral stamina, 'the will to do and the soul to dare' were the passports with which he entered the great arena of life—the *Grihasta Ashrama* (stage of householder). Truth, rectitude, knowledge piety and devotion to God were the keystones in the noble edifice

of *Brahmacharya* upon which he reared a stately superstructure and carved out a worthy career for himself. Thus we see that *Brahmacharya Ashram* was a stage of conservation, growth and development, and *Grihastha* of laying out and expenditure. The naturalness and wisdom of this system is mainfest from the fact that even in the vegetable kingdom plants have a stage of conservation and growth followed by a stage of laying out and fruition. How inevitable must be the fall and how certain must be the degeneration of a nation which has totally neglected such a sacred institution as *Brahmacharya*.

What the noble system of *Brahmacharya* could do I have not words to express, but I cannot refrain from drawing your attention to its latest product—I allude to Swami Dayananda. Not only his compact and well-knit limbs, broad and massive forehead, expansive chest, gigantic built and majestic and commanding figure were due to his having drunk deep in the fountain of *Brahmacharya* but the secret of his wonderfully retentive memory, clear brain, quick apprehension, capacious and comprehensive intellect which was a veritable mine of facts and figures, his Stentorian voice and profound scholarship as well as of his pure lofty and sublime teachings, and of his burning zeal for **परोपकार** (universal good) was also traceable to the same cause. The Arya Samaj has conferred a very great boon upon the people of this country by reviving the ancient institution of *Brahmacharya* and opening a Gurukula at Haridwar which has already, within the brief span of its existence, shown unmistakeable signs of public appreciation and support but deserves much greater help and patronage to meet the exceedingly noble aims contemplated by it.

Passing from the *Brahmacharya Ashrama* let me crave your indulgence for briefly touching upon the *Sanskâras* (**संस्कार**) sacraments——the sixth beauty of Vedic Dharma. Our

Shastràs have laid down 16 sacraments to be observed from conception to death. The philosophy of these *Sanskâras* is unique and their influence is permanent and abiding. They are no mere rituals ordained for the moment but under the garb of ceremony they shape and mould a life-long character which can never be obliterated. The first *Sanskar* believed in by the Arya Samaj is that of गर्भाधान or conception. It is performed when the would-be child, no bigger than the tiniest seedling, has found a safe abode in its mother's womb. This is the most critical period of life and the most consequential, for it determines the future career of the child to a great extent. It is therefore absolutely necessary that such a period should be associated with high thoughts and noble aspirations for the circumstances under which a child is born leave a permanent, indelible mark upon it. The story of the birth of Napoleon must be familiar to many and is an illustration in point. It is for this purpose that our Shastras have enjoined upon us to observe this sacred sacrament. Another great sacrament which deserves our serious consideration is that of marriage. Marriage, according to the Vedas, is not a social contract which can be annulled at will or at the utmost by the operation of earthly law, nor is its office to pander for sin and satisfy the cravings of the flesh but on the other hand it is an indissoluble tie entered into by two persons with mutual pledges of troth fidelity and love, which is sanctified by the recitation of holy texts from the Vedas before the Sacred Fire and witnessed, rejoiced and blessed by the elders and holy men from far and near. I cannot imagine anything more solemn in its conception more sacred in its purpose, more impressive in its details, more sublime in its execution and more gladsome in its *finăle* than an Aryan marriage. Cradle marriages and those before the

age of discretion were quite unknown to the Aryans and no one was more alive to the importance of adult marriages than our forefathers. After maintaining his *Brahmacharya* for 25 years and completing the course of education in the seminary a student-celibate was allowed to embark on the ocean of *Grihasta* with an equally continent girl of 16 who had likewise attended her Gurukula and completed her education. Nuptials were celebrated not so much on the basis of lineage, rank or position as on the merits, deeds and habits of the parties. Personal equation played the most important part in the choice of a partner for life. The function of marriage was not the satisfaction of bestial lust but to transmit a sturdy and devout progeny worthy of the traditions of those times and it was from this point of view alone that in some cases *niyoga* (नियोग) had to be resorted to—which nowadays to many affords a stumbling block in the otherwise holy teachings ot the Vedas. The ideal wife depicted in the Mahabharta as the companion of solitude, the best adviser in times of emergency and the best solace in weal and woe could only be the result of such holy marriages. As regards the high estimation in which woman was held, suffice it to say that she was never looked upon as chattel, property or slave as many religions regard her to be but the very word *ardhangi* (अर्धाङ्गी) shows that she was regarded in every way equal to man. In our Shastras woman is generally honoured by the name of 'presiding goddess of the house' and 'Lakshmi' the giver of all good things. The Vedas and Upanishads oft proclaim that ignorance (अविद्या) is the mother of sin. Keeping this fact fully in view the education of girls was as much a matter of prime importance to the Aryans of old as that of the boys, and keeping still further their sphere of activity in view their education was more of the heart than

of the head ; more of tender feelings, sentiments and emotions than of hard logical reasoning and argumentation, more of kindness, compassion and love than of sternness aud hardihood. Still such marvellous prodigies of learning as Lilavati, Gargi and Maitreyi adorned the society of those days. The chief ornament of a woman, however, was her chastity and devotion to her husband (पतिव्रता धर्म). Accoutred with this weapon of self-defence the lovely Shakuntula, beautifully immortalised by Kali Das, after facing a great many trials was at last reclaimed by her husband Prince Dushyant who had forgotten her under the operation of a Rishi's curse. Embellished with this diadem the patient and sore-tried Savitri, who is enshrined in the hearts of millions of Hindu ladies who dedicate one night in the year in commemorating the name of her whose love was not conquered by death, chose the ill-fated Satyavahan, who was destined to live for one year only, as her husband and all the entreaties of her parents and of the Rishi Narad could not deter her from evading her plighted word. How pathetic touching and sublime is her reply to her father :—

> " Pardon witless maiden's feelings ! but beneath the eye of Heaven,
> Only once a maiden chooseth, twice her troth may not be given !
> Long his life or be it narrow, and his Virtues great or none,
> Brave Satyavahan is my husband, he my heart and troth hath won!
> What a maiden's heart has chosen that a maiden's lips confess,
> True to him, thy poor Savitri goes into the wilderness."
>
> Mahabharta by R. C. Dutt.

How she battled with *Yama*, and finally not only won her husband's life but her father-in-law's eye sight and lost kingdom as well must be familiar to many of us. The lovely Sita is still more enshrined in the hearts of Hindu women, girls or matrons, high or low, rich or poor. When her husband dissuades her from following him into exile she curtly replies :—

"For the faithful woman follows where her wedded lord may lead,
In the banishment of Rama, Sita's exile is decreed,
Sire nor son nor loving brother rules the wedded woman's state,
With her lord she falls or rises, with her consort courts her fate,
If the righteous son of Raghu wends to forests dark and drear,
Sita steps before her husband wild and thorny paths to clear!
Like the tasted refuse water cast thy timid thoughts aside,
Take me to the pathless jungle, bid me by my lord abide,
Car and steed and gilded palace, vain are these to woman's life,
Dearer is her husband's shadow to the loved and loving wife!
For my mother often taught me and my father often spake,
That her home the wedded woman doth beside her husband make,
As the shadow to the substance, to her lord is faithful wife,
And she parts not from her consort till she parts with fleeting life!"

Ramayana by R. C. Dutt.

The enfeebled Sita, strong as she was in her *pativrata dharama* defied the gigantic Ravana who was a person of almost superhuman powers and was a terror of his age, far and wide. This virtue is so deeply ingrained in the hearts of the ladies of Arya Varta that even in these degenerate times Padmavati and many a princely Rajput lady have immolated themselves on the burning pyre rather than risk their *pativrata dharma*. That such ideal women were not uncommon in ancient India redounds to the sublime and lofty teachings of our Shastras. Manu says

यत्र नार्य्यास्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः ।
यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राऽफलाः क्रियाः ॥

Manu III, 56.

"Where women are respected there the gods dwell and where they are not, all actions are fruitless." We have only to open our eyes and see that this prophecy is literally fulfilled in Hindu society of the present day by their treating womankind

as chattel and immuring them within the foreclosures of their dingy houses

Gentlemen! I believe I have taken a good deal of your time in enumerating only half a dozen beauties of the *Vedic Dharma.* There are many others but time does not allow me to dwell upon them. Let me now pause and sum up what I have said. The *Vedic Dharma*, gentlemen, teaches not the worship of stocks and stones or of dead, inert matter but of one true, intelligent and blissful God who is not only our just and benevolent father but is our merciful mother as well. It teaches that all mankind are His children whose essential duty is to know and worship Him truly as His true knowledge and worship alone can unite them to Him. It does not hold out any hope of a *gratis* salvation obtained by proxy but lays down that one's own merit and good deeds (कर्म्म) purified by knowledge (ज्ञान) a rigid course of morality and ethics persistently followed are the only passports to Heaven and not blind faith in any human being. It denounces all sorts of superstitions, heresies, material worship, shams, hypocrisies and falsehoods and teaches that the Veda alone is the repository of all true learning and is true for all human beings from aeon to aeon and that nobody has a right to withhold another from the benefits of its teachings It enjoins upon us to respect women and accord them the position of a guiding angel of the household and to illuminate the recesses of their minds and hearts with the light of knowledge and not to immure them into the dungeons of Pardah System instead. It lays great stress upon the purity and permanence of the marriage tie and inculcates adult marriages. It impresses that education should be broadcast and *gratis* and its aim should be the harmonious development of all faculties—physical, mental and spiritual, and

that this can only be achieved by observing *Brahmacharya.* It divides human society into four divisions for the facilitating and expediting of mundane affairs but at the same time it is an ideally cosmopolitan religion. Not human brotherhood is its keynote but it goes beyond that and proclaims in trumpet tones मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे . Look with the eye of a friend upon *all sentient beings.* It requires of all men due observance of the principal daily duties, *viz.* संध्योपासन (worship of God) अग्निहोत्र (burnt offering for the purification of atmosphere), पितृयज्ञ (service of parents, saints and elders), बलिवैश्य देवयज्ञ (maintenance of helpless creatures, birds, insects, etc. by food and otherwise) and lastly अतिथियज्ञ (Hospitality in store for an uninvited guest). This being a part of the daily curriculum I ask you can charity or kindness or mercy or purity go further? But this is not all. The Vedic religion lays down elaborate rules for reaching the top rung of the divine ladder for the Vedic God is not an anthromorphic God who can be approached by intercession of some mediate power or who can be realized by any sinful mind or vicious heart or who can be seen by these gross, material eyes but first all evil must be perfectly burnt in the fire of knowledge and the soul purified in the furnace of experience before the goal is attained. The eight stages detailed in the Yoga philosophy for entering into the veritable consciousness of the God-presence are as follows:—

यम, नियम, आसन, प्राणायाम, प्रत्याहार, धारणा, ध्यान and समाधि ॥

Only a very brief allusion to the first two will indicate the excellence and comprehensiveness of the whole. By यम is meant अहिंसा (not to torment *any sentient creature* either

physically or mentally but to advocate and practise love and unity); सत्य (to be truthful in thought, word and deed); अस्तेय (not to appropriate anybody's things, rights or property), ब्रह्मचर्य्य (observance of celibacy by conserving seminal fluid till a fixed period and acquisition of knowledge) and अपरिग्रह (control of senses) and by नियम is indicated शौच (external and internal purity), सन्तोष (contentment in all circumstances of life and fortitude), तप (austerities and penances *i.e.* a life of toil and labour) स्वाध्याय (unremitting study of Vedas and other holy lore) and ईश्वर प्रणिधान (contemplation of God and dedication of man's will to Him). Unless and until a man has practised these initial virtues he cannot hope to attain the final object of existence. But when once these credentials have been possessed the way to salvation becomes smooth and possible. Gentlemen I now ask you in the name of justice whether such high, lofty and sublime ideals of life can be found in any other religion. If you say that these are only ideals and were never brought into practice then for your edification I propose to bring in evidence the life-history of a few noble souls who adorned this country of ours in ancient times. Can anybody conceive of a higher or better ideal of truth than that presented by Nachiketa who in order to fulfil a hasty word uttered by his father in anger went to the abode of Yama, the god of death and learnt the secret of immortality or Raja Harish Chandra, the very embodiment of Truth whose motto was that the sun, and the moon may leave their places but he shall never relinquish truth? The story of the latter's having made over the whole of his kingdom to Vishwamitra and then of having sold himself and his queen as slaves to find the *dakshina* (presentation fee) or the Rishi must be familiar to most of you. Harishchandra

becomes the slave of a *Chandala* who received the cloths covered upon the corpses which were carried to the burning ground. His wife becomes the slave of a Brahmana and their only child Rohidas dies of snake-bite and the queen carries his dead body to the crematorium but the truth-abiding Harishchandra even in this sorely trying moment does not leave his सत्य (truth) and demands the fee on behalf of his master before he allows his own child to be burnt. Or take the case of Ram Chandra who in order to redeem the pledge of his father goes into exile of 14 years with serene self-possession and perfect composure and all the wealth of the world cannot make him swerve by an inch from his firm resolve. When the affectionate Bharat quite unmindful of the wily machinations of his mother persuades him to return to Ayodhia aud resume his father's throne he immediately replies :—

" List ! the moon may lose his lustre, Himalaya lose his snow,
Heaving ocean pass his confines surging from the caves below,
But the truth abiding Rama will not move from promise given,
He hath spoke and will not palter, help him rightous god in heaven,
Blazing like the sun in splendour, beauteous like the Lord of Night,
Rama vowed his vow of Duty, changeless is his holy might !"

Ramayana by R. C. Dutt.

Or look again to Yudhishthira the very personification of Truth ; says he : " My heart, O Krishna, is naturally inclined towards virtue. The man who wishes to reap the fruits of virtue is a trader in it. He is mean and he shold never be counted amongst the virtuous." While wandering through the jungle with his 4 brothers he asks for water and his brothers, disregarding the queries of some unknown power under the

guise of a bird which was no other than धर्म the god of righteausness, try to take water and are forthwith killed by him, Yudhishthira himself goes to the spot and after duly answering his questions quenches his thirst. Being pleased with his answers the god of righteousness asks him to choose a boon for the life of any one of his brothers. The saintly Yudhishthira asks for the life of Nakula his half-brother but to test him the god *Dharmaraj* entices him to intercede for the life either of Arjuna or of Bhima who were his real brothers but Yudhishthira is firm in his supplication and answers in the following touching couplets :—

धर्म्मएव हतो हन्ति, धर्म्मों रक्षति रक्षितः ।
तस्माद्धर्म्मं न त्यजामि, मानो धर्म्मों हतोऽवधीत ॥
धर्म्मशीलः सदा राजा इति मां मानवा विदुः ।
स धर्म्मान्न चलिष्यामि, नकुलो यक्ष जीवतु ॥
कुन्ती चैव तु माद्रीच द्वे भार्ये तु पितुर्मम् ।
उभे सुपुत्रे स्यातां वै, इति मे ध्रियते मतिः ॥
यथा कुन्ती तथा माद्री विशेषो नास्ति मे तयोः ।
मातृभ्यां सममिच्छामि, नकुलो यक्ष जीवतु ॥

"*Dharma* kills those who kill it and protects those who protect it, therefore I would not renounce *dharma* lest being killed it might kill us. All the people know me to be righteous therefore I would not deviate from *dharma.* May Nakula live, O Yaksha ! Kunti and Mádri are both wives of my father therefore I wish that they both may be with their sons. As Kunti is so is madri, for me there is no difference between them. I wish equality for my mothers. O God ! may Nakula live !"

On hearing this noble speech the god of righteousness restores all his brothers to life. In only one instance though

against his will did Yudhishthira depart from truth when at the field of Kurukshetra he said to his preceptor and enemy Drona, whose death depended upon the news of the death of his son Ashvatthama, that Ashwatthama, was killed, adding either "a warrior or an elephant of that name." Drona died on hearing the news but Yudhishthira had also to pay the penalty of his equivocation. But in no other instance did he sacrifice virtue. Even in the closing scene of his life, after all those who were dear and near to him had died, and he was offered a journey to heaven he refused to go alone and leave behind him the faithful dog who had followed him, saying "This is my firm vow that I never forsake a terrified person, nor one who is devoted to me, nor one who seeks my protection nor one who is afflicted, nor one who has come to me, nor one who is unable to protect himself, nor one who beseeches for life. I shall never give up such a person till my own life is at an end."

Or look again to the great Kuru leader Bhishma who had taken a life-long vow of celibacy to please his father and his step-mother and the earnest solicitations of the latter to marry and rule the kingdom when no child was born to her could only evince the following beautiful but decisive speech from his lips: "I shall renounce the three worlds, the empire of heaven or anything that is greater than that but truth I shall never renounce. Earth may renounce its attribute of scent, water its attribute of moisture, light its attribute of exhibiting form, the air its attribute of tangibility, the sun its radiance, the comet its heat, the moon its placid rays, space its capacity of producing sound, Indra his prowess, the god of justice his impartiality, but truth I shall never renonnce."

Gentleman ! I have not time to speak here about Krishna

and Arjuna, Karna and Vidura, Janak and Yajnavalkya and a host of others. Ransack the whole literature of the world but you wili not meet with such lofty and high ideals of life, but our literature from the Vedas down to the epics is full of them. There can be no better, higher, or, nobler ideals on this globe. India stands sadly in need of such ideals. Let us pray to God that through His grace we may be able to appreciate and imitate them, and forming them the basis of our conduct may we be able to assimilate them in our daily lives.

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